1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42



closely paralleling that of their Hindu neighbors. On the other hand, their social organization is relatively lacking in the cleavages of caste which are so prevalent all about them. Apart from the village, which is usually composed of a number of patrilineal kin-groups, territorial organization is weakly developed, and the tribe as a whole has never been politically unified so far as historical records indicate.

Even as a unique people the Santal merit special attention. Numbering today over three million, the region they occupy contains the richest deposits of iron, coal and other crucial industrial minerals in all of India. The chief source of their livelihood, at least since the nineteenth century, has been settled agriculture. Prior to the nineteenth century, hunting was also an important livelihood activity, but the great increase in the region's population and subsequent reduction of forest areas has made game extremely scarce; it is now difficult for the inhabitants even to obtain materials for fuel and building purposes. Though the chief source of food and cash is the annual rice crop, a few vegetables are also grown and some fruit trees maintained. Some villages are near enough to a river for fish to be readily obtained, while some villages stock their local ponds. Even prior to the introduction of modern industry in the region, the Santal had ceased to be economically independent. Although they once did some pottery making, weaving, and even iron smelting, they have come to rely almost exclusively on various local Hindu castes for these material products. Women from several low Hindu castes are used frequently as midwives. While almost no Santal are ritually served by Brahmin priests, itinerant Hindu holy men (*sadhu*) visit many Santal villages, consulting horoscopes and offering prayers for a fee or donation.

Most Santal are still agriculturists, but some have turned to

2: Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42



### d. Mimicking.

We have something to make people in a way enjoy themselves, this is the game of mimicking. Only jocular people can perform this. Seeing this, people laugh awfully. In this game they show the faults of people by mimicking, e. g., how husband and wife act towards each other when in the sulks, how husband and wife go to her father's house, the sham crying of widows, the way of walking, dancing, eating, working, married people's behaviour, and so on. When they mimic women, they put on clothes like a woman, and making their voice sound like theirs they give themselves airs, and the people laugh, holding their stomachs. 536

### e. Catching fish.

Catching fish is also joyful work. They catch fish in ricefield ponds, in dams, and in rivers. The headman of the village inside the boundaries of which the place for catching fish lies, makes a public announcement. About noon on the day fixed, the people of the neighbourhood gather there. If there is any impediment in connexion with the bongas, they make a sacrifice; thereupon they catch fish with nets. Some people also catch with their hands; they start a tremendous noise; they enjoy themselves greatly. When they have done catching, they collect the small fish in the different nets, and if there are big fishes, they cut them into pieces; thereupon they collect half of the big fishes from every net, and all these the people of the village get. They make three portions of these. They give one portion to the owner of the ricefield pond or the dam, and two portions the people of the village divide among themselves. If the catching is in a river, the village headman[1] of the boundary gets one portion, and if it is within the boundaries of two villages, the headmen of the two villages get one portion, divided into equal half-portions, and the remaining two portions the people of the two villages get. We have a special way of killing fish; this they call fish-poisoning. They bring different kinds of roots and stuff from the forest and crush this and throw it into the water. Then the fishes become intoxicated, and some of them die and float up. Then they are easily caught. The names of the poisons are: the root of the stemless Date, the fruit of *corco*, *jioti* grass, the bark of *kumbir*, the bark of *sakri phol*, the fruit of *lolo*, and others. This we call *har* (fish-poison)[1]. 226 • [824]

Concerning our every day catching of fish we act as follows: A couple of men invite each other to come along, and baling out the water in a ravine or the pool of a ricefield they catch the fish. During the rainy season we make weir-baskets and set them during the night in a ricefield or a river. Fishes are caught in this, and in the morning we shake them out and bring them.

[1] Of the poisons mentioned, the stemless Date is the Phoenix acaulis, Roxb.; *corco* is the Cissampelos tomentosa, Roxb.; *jioti* is a grass growing in ricefields and moist places; *kumbir* is Careya arborea, Roxb.; *sakri phol* is a tree, sometimes planted by the Paharias; *lolo* is Randia dumetorum, Lam.

3: Mukherjea O, Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

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A Santal fishing [Page 97]
Photo : D. S. Nahar

[End Plate 6]

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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411 blade is a flat piece of iron and looks like the 'expanded wing of a flying bird'. The cutting edge is concave in the middle and it is sharp. The blade, away from the cutting edge, becomes thicker and narrower and forms a narrow neck ending in a socket to receive the handle. The handle is inserted through the socket of the blade in such a way that the cutting edge of the blade remains parallel to it. It is generally used for hunting purpose.

226 **Fishing :-** The Santals are not so interested in fishing as in hunting. Want of interest in catching fish is due to the scarcity of fishes in the streams. The following are a few methods by which they catch fish :-

The Santals make a weir with a platform at one end and the fish in their frantic efforts to go down stream, jump into this and are caught.

The Santals put bamboos cross-wise in a stream and keep a small opening, in front of which they fix a trap of wicker work which is made either of thin bamboo strips or of twigs. It is cylindrical in shape, and the size varies from two feet to two and a half feet. The mouth is broad and is furnished with a conical valve of very thin bamboo spikes. The other end is tightly closed. The fish passing through that small opening fall into the trap. The trap is prepared in such a way that once the fish enters it cannot come out. The Santali name for this trap is 'torodan'.

They also catch fish by fishing-net, which is of various types. The most common type is known as 'Hunda Jal', in which the net is fixed to three pieces of thick bamboo strips which form a triangular frame.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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One of the strips protrudes, which serves as a handle. They hold the net in the water of a shallow stream and walk up stream, after a little distance, they raise it and catch the fish. In the other type, the net is tied in a circular bamboo frame—the Santals call it 'Kabhi-Jal'. They also use bow and arrow in catching fish. The arrow head here is furnished with three heads. Fishing hook is used to catch fish now-a-days. [178]

The locality where the women catch fish is either below or between the rice-fields where there is standing water. In such places the Santals catch fish in the following way. The water is first laved out sufficiently to make it possible to reach the bottom with one's hand. They go into the water and move about to stir up the mud. The fish becomes confused and numb in the slushy water and are easily caught with the hand.

Catching fish by poisoning is not unknown to the Santals. The poison used for this purpose is got from the roots and bark of certain trees[1]. They powder them and throw them into the stagnant water of either pond or into a certain part of a stream, the fish are drugged and after some time they float on the surface and are caught.

Like hunting, the Santals have communal fishing in which people from neighbouring villages take part. The headman of the village, inside the boundary of which they want to catch fish, announces the date by a branch of a tree with leaves. On the appointed day they gather and after propitiating the bongas with fowls, they start for fishing. [622] [824] [782]

1. Rev. Bodding collected the names of the trees which are as follows :- The roots of 'Kita' (Phoenix acaulis Roxb.). The bark of 'Kumbir' (Careya arborea Roxb.). The bark of a tree called 'Sakri Phal'. [824]

41 Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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796 241 tied and vermilion with mustard oil painted. Friends come and go visiting one another, all (both male and female) more or less drunk and wild with excitement. [624] After all is over, the young people drink and eat in the house of the *jog-manjhi*.

[786] The other two days are for nothing but to enjoy life, merry-making going on in full swing with full sex license. For the five days and nights during which the festival lasts the Santals indulge in a veritable saturnalia giving themselves up to dancing, eating, drinking, singing and sexual license. Although this license does not allow adultery, nor does it sanction intercourse between persons of the same sept, yet if the latter offence is committed it is punished less severely than at other times.

796 **Sakrat Festival.** After this another festival known as *Sakrat* takes place on the last day of the month of [177] Pous (December and January). This is an imitation of [226] the Hindu *Pous Sankranti* festival. The Santals (only males) go out fishing to the streamlet a day before the actual festival. From the morning of that day the women are busy preparing cakes of parched rice. [262] The men folk eat curd and parched rice (chura) and go out for hunting in the morning. The cakes are first offered to the ancestors and then eaten. In the after- [526] noon the *Jogmanjhi* collects all the adult males of the [624] village in an adjoining field for archery and other sports. After that in the evening they dance and sing, drink rice beer and spend the day in various kinds of amusements. On the third day they go out to the fair [262] or market (*hat*) after eating a preparation of rice and dal boiled together.